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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-11 DOTE-00 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20

RSC-01 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 L-03 COME-00 H-03 PA-04

PRS-01 USIA-15 DRC-01 /107 W
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P 142358Z JUN 74
FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2176
INFO AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ETRN, MX
SUBJECT: TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS WITH CIUDAD JUAREZ AND EL PASO: MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER RABASA AND SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION MENDEZ DOCURRO
REF: (A) CIUDAD JUAREZ 0065, (B) CIUDAD JUAREZ A-18

1. SUMMARY: EL PASO AND EMBASSY OFFICIALS MET JUNE 12 WITH MEXICAN FONMIN RABASA IN HOPE OF RESOLVING EL PASO-JUAREZ TRANSPORTATION PROBLEM. FONMIN EXPRESSED CONCERN SAID PROBLEM MAY ESCALATE INTO MAJOR IRRITANT IN U.S.-MEXICO RELATIONS AND PROPOSED CREATION OF BINATIONAL COMMISSION WITH FULL AUTHORITY TO ENACT REASONABLE SOLUTION. RABASA REQUESTED MINISTER OF TRANSPORTATION MENDEZ DOCURRO TO LEND ALL POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE TO COMMISSION AND, IN MEETING WITH MENDEZ DOCURRO, EL PASO AND EMBASSY REPRESENTATIVES WERE ASSURED OF HIS SUPPORT. END SUMMARY.

2. AS REPORTED ABOVE REFERENCES, TRANSPORTATION PROBLEMS BETWEEN CIUDAD JUAREZ AND EL PASO, TEXAS, FOLLOWING STOPPAGE OF STREET CAR SERVICE LAST AUGUST, HAVE ESCALATED TO DEGREE THEY RISK CONTINUING GOODWILL BETWEEN THE NEIGHBORING BORDER CITIES. SITUATION, ORIGINATING IN GOM REFUSAL ALLOW DETERIORATED STREET CAR SYSTEM TO OPERATE IN JUAREZ, CULMINATED IN STOPPAGE OF ALL MEANS OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT ACROSS BORDER (STREETCARS, BUSES, TAXIS) BY MAY 23. ATTEND-
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ANT REACTION ON BOTH SIDES HAS BALLOONED TO WHERE IT THREATENS

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TO BECOME SERIOUS IRRITANT IN GENERALLY GOOD RELATIONS ALONG FRONTIER.

3. MAY 31 MEETING BETWEEN MAYORS OF EL PASO AND CIUDAD JUAREZ AND RESPECTIVE U.S. AND MEXICAN CONSULS RESULTED IN INTERIM AGREEMENT BETWEEN CITIES ON RESTORING BUS AND TAXI SERVICE. ACCORDING TO EL PASO REPRESENTATIVE MATTER APPARENTLY CAME TO ATTENTION OF MEXICAN FONMIN RABASA AND AT MEETING MEXICAN REPRESENTATIVES APPEARED TO HAVE INSTRUCTIONS TO SETTLE ISSUE. POSSIBILITY OF LONG-TERM AGREEMENT HAMPERED, HOWEVER, BY CONFLICTING LAWS WHICH RESTRICT BINATIONAL EFFORTS IN TRANSPORT FIELD.

4. AT REQUEST EL PASO REPRESENTATIVE, MAYOR PRO TEM RUBEN SCHAEFFER, WHO IS IN MEXICO TO OBSERVE U.S.-MEXICO AIR NEGOTIATIONS, EMBASSY MADE ROUTINE REQUEST JUNE 12 FOR MEETING WITH FONMIN RABASA TO CLARIFY

CITUATION AND SEEK GOM SUPPORT FOR RESOLUTION OF ISSUE. REPORTS OF RABASA'S INTEREST APPARENTLY ACCURATE SINCE APPOINTMENT GRANTED IMMEDIATELY. EL PASO REPRESENTATIVES, ACCOMPANIED BY EMBASSY E/C COUNSELOR, MET WITH RABASA AND APPRISED HIM OF CONTINUING SERIOUS-NESS OF SITUATION. FONMIN AGREED POTENTIAL EXISTED FOR INCIDENT THAT COULD MAR GOOD RELATIONS ALONG BORDER AND OFFERED MOBILIZE GOM AGENCIES CONCERNED (FOREIGN RELATIONS, TRANSPORTATION) AND SUGGESTED CREATION OF A BINATIONAL COMMISSION EMPOWERED TO RESOLVE ISSUE. DURING MEETING RABASA HIMSELF TELEPHONED TO MAKE APPOINTMENT FOR U.S. GROUP TO MEET WITH SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION MDNDEZ DOCURRO IN ORDER TO DISCUSS TRANSPORT ASPECTS OF PROBLEM.

5. AT SUBSEQUENT MEETING SAME DAY WITH MENDEZ DOCURRO, LATTER WAS DESCRIBED BY SCHAEFFER AS UNUSUALLY FORTHCOMING. MENDEZ DOCURRO AGREED TO SUPPORT BINATIONAL COMMISSION, NOTED RABASA'S INTEREST, AND AGREED WITH EL PASO'S ASSERTION THAT SAID COMMISSION REQUIRED TECHNICAL AS WELL AS POLITICAL

COMPETENCY. MENDEZ DOCURRO INDICATED HE WOULD NOMINATE REPRESENTATIVE FROM TRANSPORTATION MINISTRY, RATHER THAN LOCAL CIUDAD JUAREZ OFFICIAL,

TO SERVE ON COMMISSION. COMMISSION WOULD INCLUDE REPRESENTATIVES FROM U.S. AND MEXICO TRANSPORTATION AND FOREIGN AFF-AIRS AGENCIES, AS WELL AS LOCAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS. ALL MEMBERS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MEXICAN DELEGATION EXPECTED TO BE KNOWN WITHIN TWO WEEKS.

6. COMMENT: LATER ON JUNE 12 RABASA MENTIONED TO AMBASSADOR THAT GOM WANTED TO SOLVE EL PASO-JUAREZ PROBLEM BEFORE IT DEVELOPED INTO POLITICAL ISSUE ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER. CONDITIONS THUS APPEAR RIPE FOR SOLUTION TO EL PASO-CIUDAD JUAREZ DISPUTE, AND EMBASSY BELIEVES EVERY EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF RABASA'S AND MENDEZ DOCURRO'S PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN FINDING SOLUTION.

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RABASA'S PERSONAL SUGGESTION OF BINATIONAL COMMISSION AUGURS SERIOUS CONSIDERATION BY GOM. EMBASSY CONCERNED, HOWEVER, EL PASO APPROACH TO FONMIN RABASA MAY COMPLICATE APPARENT CONTINUING DIALOGUE (REPORTED REFTEL A) BETWEEN LOCAL JUAREZ AND EL PASO OFFICIALS.

7. MR. REUBEN SCHAEFFER WAS RECEIVED BY FONMIN RABASA AS REPRESENTATIVE OF CITY EL PASO, BUT WE HAVE SOME MISGIVINGS ABOUT EXTENT TO WHICH SCHAEFFER AS EL PASO MAYOR PRO TEM SPEAKS FOR MAYOR AND OTHER CITY OFFICIALS. EMBASSY OFFICIALS MADE NO REPEAT NO COMMITMENT TO PLAN

ON PART OF USG. NEVERTHELESS, WE BELIEVE SOLUTION TO EL PASO-JUAREZ TRANSPORTATION PROBLEM COULD SET USEFUL PATTERN FOR FURTHER COOPERATIVE EFFORTS IN URBAN PROBLEMS ON BORDER.

8. SCHAEFFER INFORMS US HE INTENDS HOLD PRESS CONFERENCE THIS SUBJECT ON HIS RETURN TO EL PASO; WE SUGGEST THEREFORE THAT CONTENTS OF ABOVE MESSAGE BE PASSED AS PROMPTLY AS POSSIBLE TO DOT OFFICIALS AND OTHERS CONCERNED WITH EL PASO MATTER. WE UNDERSTAND ALSO THAT SENATOR BENTSEN (TEXAS) HAS INTEREST IN DEVELOPMENTS.

9. AS FURTHER POINT EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT U.S. CONSUL JUAREZ (MR. SHAPIRO) BE KEPT UP TO DATE ON LATEST DEVELOPMENTS AND BE PART OF ANY BINATIONAL COMMISSION CREATED ON THIS ISSUE.
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